

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 01474 101237Z

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ACTION CU-04

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0239

INFO USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN, SCUL, DR

SUBJECT: "OPERATION SHOESTRING"--MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

1. PURSUING OUR POLICY OF ENCOURAGING U.S. CULTURAL AND SPORTS EVENTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WITHOUT THE USE OF OFFICIAL FUNDS, THE COUNTRY TEAM HAS CONTINUED ITS EXPLORATION OF RESOURCES IN THE U.S. PRIVATE SECTOR. WE THINK THAT WE MAY HAVE HIT A RICH VEIN IN MADISON SQUARE GARDEN.

2. AS A RESULT OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE AMBASSADOR AND GULF AND WESTERN BOARD CHAIRMAN BLUDHORN, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN BOARD CHAIRMAN IRVING MITCHELL FELT (IMF) AND HIS WIFE HAVE BEEN THE AMBASSADOR'S PERSONAL GUESTS HERE DURING APRIL 4-9. (GULF AND WESTERN IS THE LARGEST SINGLE SHAREHOLDER OF MADISON SQUARE GARDEN STOCK AND CHARLES BLUDHORN IS PRESIDENT OF ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.) THE FAVORABLE LOCAL ATMOSPHERE TOWARD SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT RESULTING FROM THE OUTSTANDING SUCCESSES OF THE TWELFTH GAMES AND OF THE MILWAUKEE SYMPHONY, TOGETHER WITH GULF AND WESTERN AMERICAS GENEROUS STOCK GIFT FOR SPORTS PROMOTION, HAVE MADE THE FELT VISIT TIMELY.

3. FELT, WHO IS VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THE SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT FIELDS AS WELL AS EXTREMELY PLEASANT AND CONSTRUCTIVE PERSONALLY, VISITED ALL OF THE SPORTS INSTALLATIONS CONSTRUCTED FOR THE TWELFTH GAMES AND THE NATIONAL THEATER. ACCOMPANIED BY THE AMBASSADOR HE THEN SPENT MORE THAN AN HOUR WITH PRESIDENT BALAGUER DURING WHICH HE MADE A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC PROPOSALS. THE PRESIDENT'S ALREADY

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PAGE 02 SANTO 01474 101237Z

AWAKENED INTEREST IN THE SPORTS AND CULTURAL AREAS, EVIDENCED BY

HIS RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CREATION OF A SPORTS AND CULTURE CABINET POSITION, WAS MANIFESTLY HEIGHTENED BY FELT'S VIEWS. (AFTER THE MEETING HE MENTIONED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE OUGHT TO DECORATE FELT; THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT THE PRESIDENT AWAIT PERFORMANCE.)

4. AT THIS STAGE, MUCH OF FELT'S THINKING IS PRELIMINARY. HE COMMANDS CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES, HAS EXTENSIVE CONTACTS IN THE SPORTS AND CULTURAL WORLDS, AND IS VERY WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (HE AND MRS. FELT WERE MARRIED HERE ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO). HE IS DETERMINED TO BOOK INTO SANTO DOMINGO ONE OF THE TOURING "HOLIDAY-ON-ICE" SHOWS (WHICH THE GARDEN OWNS). HE ALSO OFFERED TO PLAN FOR A VISIT BY THE NEW YORK KNICKS (WHOM THE GARDEN ALSO OWNS) NEXT YEAR, SINCE PERSONAL COMMITMENTS BY SOME OF THE PLAYERS AFTER THE CURRENT NBA CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYOFFS FORECLOSED THEIR COMING NEXT MONTH. IN ADDITION TO SPECTATOR PERFORMANCES SUCH AS THESE, FELT HAD A NUMBER OF INTERESTING SUGGESTIONS REGARDING PARTICIPANT SPORT PROGRAMS FOR DOMINICAN YOUTH. HE WILL PURSUE MATTERS AT HIS END AND HAS OFFERED TO RETURN HERE AS OFTEN AS IT IS THOUGHT THAT HE MIGHT BE HELPFUL.

5. HAVING BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING FELT TOGETHER WITH TOP DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT AND SPORTS OFFICIALS, THE COUNTRY TEAM WILL REVERT TO A SOMEWHAT MORE PASSIVE ROLE WHILE LOOKING FOR APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES TO KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING.

HURWITCH

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